

BleachWatch Virgin Islands

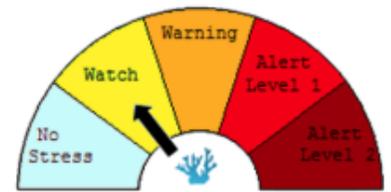
October Monthly Newsletter

Current coral bleaching alert level: WATCH as of October 25, 2018

NOAA's Coral Reef Watch 5-kilometer Coral Bleaching Alert Area indicates that the US Virgin Islands (USVI) and surrounding area is currently experiencing low levels of thermal stress (Figure 1).

USVI bleaching conditions summary:

- **Ocean temperatures are higher than normal, but are not yet a major concern for mass coral bleaching.** The current sea surface temperature (SST) is slightly greater than the monthly maximum mean, but remains below the bleaching threshold (Figure 2). Corals experience thermal stress when the SST is 1°C greater than the warmest monthly mean temperature, known as the maximum monthly mean. The bleaching threshold is one degree above the maximum monthly mean. When SST exceeds the bleaching threshold, corals experience thermal stress and mass bleaching events are more likely to occur.
- **Coral bleaching risk is relatively low since temperature stress has not been accumulating in recent weeks.** The risk of coral bleaching increases when SST remains higher than normal over an extended period of time. Accumulated heat stress can be quantified using Degree Heating Weeks (DHW). One DHW is equal to one week with temperatures 1°C greater than the maximum monthly mean. Currently, DHW = 0 in the USVI (Figure 1).
- **Based on current predictions, coral bleaching risk is not expected to significantly change until December.** Based on 4-month predictions from NOAA, the USVI is expected to remain under a bleaching watch for another four weeks. As the bleaching season comes to a close, the territory will likely be under no stress by December. Some regions of the northern Caribbean, such as the west coast of Florida, are already under no stress (Figure 3).



Current Coral Bleaching Alert Level

[Alert Gauges & Outlook](#) | [Time Series Graphs & Data](#)

Data values derived from 90th percentile HotSpot

SST = 28.709 Anomaly = 0.383

HotSpot = 0.000 DHW = 0.000

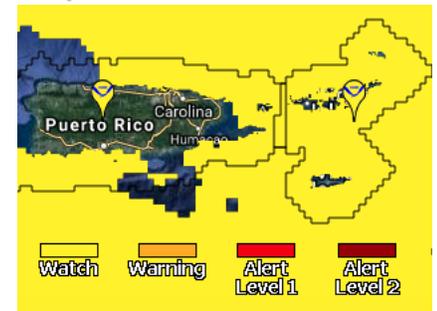


Figure 1 NOAA's Coral Reef Watch local bleaching alert status as of October 25, 2018
<https://coralreefwatch.noaa.gov/vs/map.php>

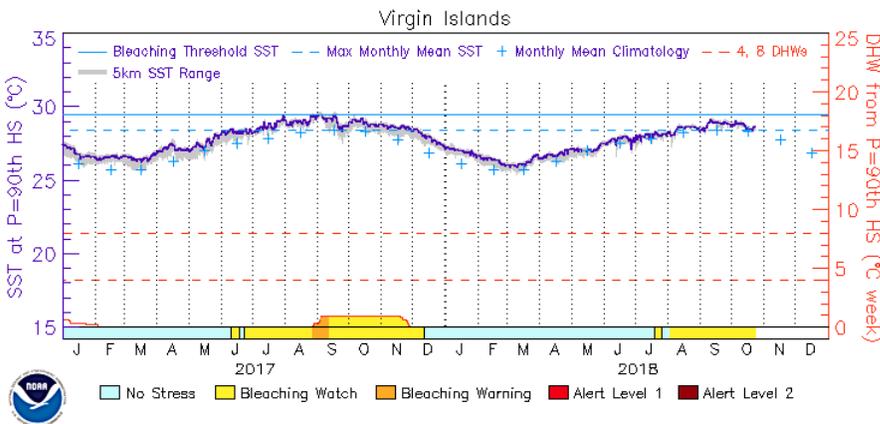


Figure 2 NOAA's Coral Reef Watch regional virtual stations data as of October 25, 2018
<https://coralreefwatch.noaa.gov/vs/data.php>

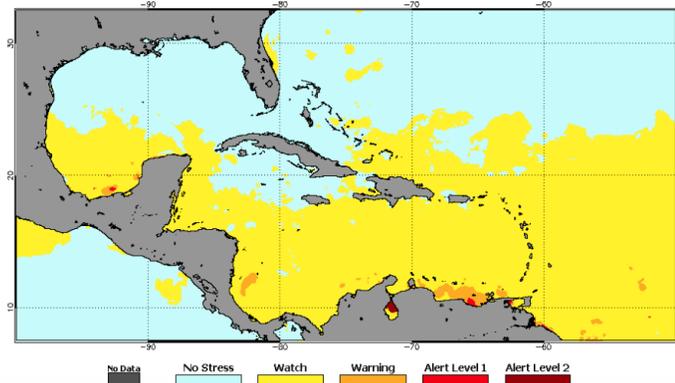


Figure 3 NOAA's Coral Reef Watch Caribbean-wide bleaching alert status as of October 25, 2018
<https://coralreefwatch.noaa.gov/product/5km/>

Volunteer report summary:

This month, BleachWatch received 2 reports of an abundance of *Ramicrosta* algae in St. Thomas near Coki Point. There was also one report of bleaching, one report of paling, and one report of black band disease in St. Thomas. However, each of these cases were fairly isolated.

Reports from St. Croix included the following:

- Brain corals paling on the north shore of the island
- Low incidence (1-10%) of plate corals and boulder corals showing some partial bleaching, also on the north shore
- Some isolated branching corals with partial bleaching at Buck Island

UPDATES:

BleachWatch training and group snorkel event on St. Thomas – date and time TBA!

BleachWatch VI is pairing with the University of the Virgin Island's Coastal Conservation Club to host a group training and in-water practice session. Participants will learn about BleachWatch VI and will have the opportunity to see examples of healthy and impacted corals in the water. Each volunteer will complete a BleachWatch survey and submit a report together as a group. More details about this event will be announced soon!

The BleachWatch VI App is here!

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